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Hartford Hilton reopens downtown after \$33 million renovation

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HARTFORD, Conn. -- The Hartford Hilton reopened Tuesday after a year and a \$33 million renovation.

As Hartford undergoes a \$2 billion revitalization, some of it state-funded, city officials said the Hilton project, which was privately funded, proves public investment will spur development.

"This shows that there's confidence in the market," said Mayor Eddie A. Perez.

The Hilton was developed by the Waterford Group, which is also master developer for Adriaen's Landing, a massive \$771 million project along Hartford's riverfront funded by public and private money. It includes a convention center and 409-room Marriott scheduled to open over the summer.

"I think that has spurred a lot investment," said Len Wolman, chairman and CEO of the Waterford Group. "This city has such huge potential."

About 20 of the Hilton's 392 rooms were booked Tuesday night, the first it was open to guests. The hotel should be full by the weekend, when the Big East women's basketball tournament starts at the adjacent Hartford Civic Center, which is also undergoing a major renovation.

Perez, Wolman and others at a ribbon-cutting ceremony Tuesday welcomed 120 returning employees and nearly 100 new ones. The theme from "Rocky" played and blue and white confetti shot into the air as they walked down a red carpet and into a reception.

"It feels good coming back here after being out over a year," said Jerry Bush of Meriden, a banquet waiter who has worked at the Hilton since 1975. "Its a beautiful thing for Hartford."

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